
Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Finance and Major Projects
Date	13 March 2023
Present	Councillor Ayre
In Attendance	John Madden (Strategic Manager Corporate Strategy and City Partnerships) Pauline Stuchfield (Director of Customer and Communities) David Walker (Head of Customer and Exchequer Services)
Apologies	Councillor Craghill

25. Declarations of Interest [10.00]

The Executive Member was asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests, not included on the Register of Interests, or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests that he might have had in respect of business on the agenda. He confirmed he had none.

26. Public Participation [10.00]

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Hughie Ferguson spoke on agenda item 6 - Council Tax Hardship fund and Retail Hospitality and Leisure relief. He expressed concern regarding energy costs and the cost of living crisis for sports facilities, in particular swimming pools such as the New Earswick Swimming Pool. He noted that the Ward profile for Huntington and New Earswick showed obesity in Reception and Year 6 which was an area of concern for York and he and asked how this problem would be tackled.

27. Minutes [10.02]

Resolved: That the minutes of the Decision Session of the Executive Member for Finance and Major Projects held on 12 January 2023 be approved and signed by the Executive Member as a correct record.

28. Council Tax Hardship fund and Retail Hospitality and Leisure relief [10.02]

The Executive Member considered a report that provided details of the Retail, Hospitality & Leisure (RHL) business rate relief and Council Tax Support (CTS) hardship schemes 2023/24 for noting by the Executive Member for Finance & Major Projects. To avoid complications with the 2023/24 annual billing cycle an officer decision was made by the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Executive Member on 14 February 2023. This was shown at Annex D of the report. With reference to recommendation C, the Director of Customer and Communities advised that recommendation for approval, and not noting.

The Head of Customer and Exchequer Services detailed the report noting that it continued rate relief from the government but did not address increased costs for swimming pools which may be addressed in the Chancellor's Spring Budget. The Executive Member thanked staff for their work and then;

Resolved: That;

- a) The council's RHL scheme (as detailed in paragraphs 5 – 12 of the published report) be noted.
- b) The council's CTS hardship scheme (as detailed in paragraphs 13 – 19 of the published report) be noted.
- c) The delegation of discretion to decide on qualifying and non-qualifying businesses (outside of those set out in Annex A of the published report) to the Head of Customer and Exchequer Services in consultation with the Head of Economic Development be approved.
- d) Approval be given to the delegation to make any changes to the council's RHL and CTS hardship scheme within the broader scope of the scheme guidance (as set at Annexes A and B of the published report) to the council's s151 officer (Chief Finance Officer) in consultation with the Executive Member for

Finance and Major Projects (as detailed in paragraphs 11 & 19 of the published report).

Reason: To provide cost of living support to business and residents hardest hit by the current economic pressures.

[The meeting adjourned from 10.07 to 10.09]

29. Recommendations for approval of grants from the Financial Inclusion Steering Group (FISG) Grant Scheme 2023/24 [10.09]

The Executive Member considered a report that sought approval of the recommended awards of grants under the above scheme for 2023/24 following a round of competitive bids and a rigorous selection panel process. The Director of Customer and Communities gave an overview of the grants from the FISG grant scheme, detailing how these had been awarded. She noted that the Strategic Manager Corporate Strategy and City Partnerships had supported the panel and he thanked the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust for their input to the FISG.

The Executive Member thanked the Strategic Manager Corporate Strategy and City Partnerships and the panel for their work on the grant scheme and he welcomed the additional £100k for the scheme. He then;

Resolved: That approval be given to the award of a total of £150,000 of grants to fund 11 projects for 2023/24, as set out in the table below, to deliver a range of financial inclusion activities by partners across the city. There is an approved budget of £50,000 for 2023/24 which will be increased to £150,000 using one-off growth. All projects are for a twelve-month period.

1. £11,644 to Age UK (York) for providing Benefits Advice through Home Visit for the extension of their Money and Benefits advice service offered to people over pension age, providing an additional two days per week of support in response to increased demand.
2. £14,585 to the Welfare Benefits Unit for Advice Extra to deliver a continuation of the Advice Extra project, building on innovative practice developed

over the last few years helping to underpin first tier advisors in responding to more complex cases.

3. £25,764 to the Peasholme Charity for My Money, My Life, to continue delivery of its financial capability pathway service, offering a range of interventions to support people from a point of 'crisis' through to a place of financial stability.
4. £20,000* to the Community Furniture Store for their IT Reuse project to continue to help reduce digital exclusion through device provision and skills enhancement, building on key partnerships and learning from existing project. Collect digital equipment, which is wiped/repaired/configured by volunteers for distribution to individuals facing digital exclusion, enabling users to access information, manage finances, look for work, and upskill, enhancing their well-being, financial security.
5. £9,800* to Experience Counts for their 50+ Project to deliver two employment related wrap around training programmes to residents aged 50+ providing individualised coaching and support to advance into employment, self-employment, volunteering or further training.
6. £15,840 to Cotermious CIC Employment & Enterprise Programme to provide practical support and employment advice to help people navigate their way back into meaningful employment through focussed training and workshops. Aimed at York's most marginalised residents many of whom are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
7. £6,938 to OCAY (Older Citizens Advocacy York) for Benefits Advocacy to deliver comprehensive advocacy support to clients (aged 50+) caught in the benefits system to ensure they maximise their entitlement. Provides emotional/practical support to manage the challenges many face in making claims.
8. £14,271* to Refugee Action York (RAY) for Financially Included – supporting access to services and support. In collaboration with CAY continue and build on the existing project to support refugees, asylum seekers and migrants to access practical support, information and

guidance, to relieve hardship, reduce isolation, advance education and improve integration.

9. £16,221 to York Community Energy for supporting parents struggling with energy bills. The project aims to increase the financial resilience of single parents/ families with children who are struggling with their energy and other bills, ensuring they get support with managing bills and keeping warm while saving energy where possible. Includes outreach activities and practical support on energy and other issues.
10. £4,100* to York Explore for 100% Digital York Partnership. The project exists to focus on supporting digital inclusion across the city working with over 15 partners. This funding extends the post of Digital Inclusion Co-ordinator (18.5 hours p.w.) for an extra 3 months to 31/3/24 (currently funded to 31/12/23).
11. £10,837 to Citizens' Advice York for Financial Inclusion for the Traveller Community to continue the existing project working with the Travellers Trust to deliver and co-ordinate advice services to the Gypsy & Traveller Community.
*four projects part funded

Reason: To ensure that funds set aside to support the delivery of financial inclusion activity are allocated appropriately.

30. Financial Inclusion Interim Strategy 2023-25 [10.12]

The Executive Member considered a report that outlined the work undertaken to produce a draft interim strategy in line with the current Council Plan objective to *Review the Council's approach to Financial Inclusion*. The production of the strategy and its delivery priorities had been delayed by the coronavirus pandemic and then the focus of all resources has been to deliver significant support needed for residents facing the Cost-of-Living Crisis. The strategy was interim, given the launch in March 2023 of the Poverty Truth Commission, the work of which would inform strategic policy on Financial Inclusion matters going forward.

The Director of Customer and Communities detailed the report, explaining the work undertaken to produce the draft strategy and

the aims of it. The Executive Member noted also the work of the ICS York Place Board and noted the need to tackle the causes to poverty. He further noted the need to work with different partners in health and housing. He then;

Resolved: That the Interim Financial Inclusion Strategy 2023-25 be approved.

Reason: To ensure all the priorities outlined in the strategy are a focus for the council and its partners to mitigate the impact of the Cost-of-Living Crisis and drive work to address underlying causes of poverty, ensure resident income is maximised and long-term recovery is achieved.

Cllr Ayre, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 10.19 am].